


Death In The Line Of Duty: Nigerian Boxers Who Died In Ring Ended With McGuigan's Sixth-Round

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President, Organising Committee of South West Games, Lanre Alfred, (second left front row) and Executive Director, Retail Banking of FirstBank of Nigeria Limited (fourth left front row) in a group photograph with Ogun State's male and female basketball teams.

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Boxing is a sport of bravery, skill, and determination. Every time a fighter steps into the ring, they put their lives on the line, risking serious injury for the love of the sport and the pursuit of greatness. While most boxers return home safely after their bouts, some are not so fortunate. Tragically, history has seen many fighters lose their lives in the ring or as a result of injuries sustained outside of it. Between 1890 and 2011, at least 1,604 boxers around the world lost their lives due to injuries sustained in the ring, averaging about 13 deaths per year. While safety measures have improved over time, boxing remains a dangerous sport. Sadly, Nigeria has lost several of its own talented fighters to the brutality of the ring. Here, AJIBADE OLUSESAN remembers some of the Nigerian boxers who tragically died while competing.

Sherif Lawal

In May 2024, UK-based Nigerian boxer Sherif Lawal died in his very first professional fight. The 29-year-old middleweight collapsed in the ring during a match against Portuguese fighter. The referee ended the fight in the fourth round after Lawal was knocked down, but despite immediate medical attention, he later died in the hospital. The tragic incident shocked the boxing community. Heavyweight champion Tyson Fury acknowledged the dangers of boxing, stating, "We're there to inflict damage on each other... unfortunately, things like this happen now and again."

Chukwuemeka Igboanugo

Chukwuemeka Igboanugo, representing Imo State, lost his life at the 2022 National Sports Festival in Asaba, Delta State. The young boxer collapsed after receiving multiple punches in his 86kg bout. Though medical personnel rushed in to assist him, delays in treatment reportedly contributed to his death. Witnesses at the venue lamented the loss, with one coach criticizing the refereeing. The tragic death of Igboanugo once again raised concerns about the safety measures in Nigerian boxing competitions.

He was placed on life support but eventually passed away at home, leaving behind a pregnant wife. Even decades later, Mc – Guigan admitted that Ali's death haunted him, and he dec
fallen opponent.

Segun 'Success' Olanrewaju

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Nigeria and indeed the world of boxing were thrown into mourning last Saturday when former Nigerian National and West African light-heavyweight champion Segun 'Success' Olanre

During a bout against Ghanaian fighter Jon Mbanugu at the Ghana Professional Boxing League's Fight Night 15, Olanrewaju suddenly collapsed, and efforts to revive him proved abor

Reports indicate that he was ahead on points before the tragic incident occurred. His death sent shockwaves through the boxing community, with fans and colleagues mourning the l